



November 2020

Report to CAUT Council

The Librarians' and Archivists' Committee continues to monitor the working conditions of our members during these extraordinary times. We are committed to working in support of fair and equitable working environments for librarians and archivists at member institutions across Canada, as they face variable institutional responses to the covid-19 pandemic.

The committee is comprised of: Jennifer Dekker (Association of Professors of the University of Ottawa), Orvie Dingwall (University of Manitoba Faculty Association), Jane Lamothe (University of Saskatchewan Faculty Association), Kathleen Scheaffer (University of Toronto Faculty Association), Daniel Scott (Laurentian University Faculty Association), and Katherine Watmough (Thompson Rivers University Faculty Association – FPSE BC). The committee has formally met once via Zoom since the modified Spring CAUT Council, in addition to informal Zoom meetings and increased email contact.

Prior to the global pandemic, on October 25-26 2019 the CAUT Librarians' and Archivists' Conference was held in Ottawa, titled *Navigating the Reorganization*. This theme was chosen in response to reorganization exercises happening in postsecondary Libraries across Canada, in which the activities and duties, working environments, and professional priorities of librarians and archivists would be altered, sometimes drastically, often without meaningful collegial engagement. The conference was intended to provide education and national context for such reorganizations, to give attendees ideas and tools for resisting reorganizations undertaken without fulsome collegial engagement, and to offer the opportunity for librarians and archivists to share experiences and discuss reorganizations and other labour issues they face at their home institutions. The conference featured keynote speaker Larry Savage (Brock University) on "The Future of Academic Librarians and Archivists"; a panel moderated by Katherine Watmough on "The Neoliberal Context" with panelists Harriet Sonne De Torrens (University of Toronto), Francesca Holyoke (University of New Brunswick) and Marc Richard (McGill University); a panel moderated by Tim Ribaric on "Particular Cases and the Big Picture" with panelists Jennifer Dekker (University of Ottawa / Université d'Ottawa), John Costella (University of Western Ontario), and Leila Saadaoui (Laurentian University / Université Laurentienne); a panel moderated by Tara Mawhinney on "Tools of Resistance" with panelists Brenda Austin-Smith (CAUT President / Présidente de l'ACPPU), Carla Graebner (Simon Fraser University), and Immanuel Lanzaderas Legal Officer, CAUT / Conseiller juridique de l'ACPPU; and closing speaker JP Hornick with "Bringing It All Together – Mobilizing to Defend and Advance Our Work." These accomplished and inspiring speakers provided the backbone for the conference, which was enhanced by breakout discussions for attendees, and two well-received active-engagement exercises: "Reorganization Now" (led by Kate Cushon) and "The Librarians' Council" (led by Orvie Dingwall). Simultaneous translation in English and French was provided for this conference, which had 91 attendees and presenters.

The conference received positive feedback from attendee surveys, with many delegates expressing a desire for more frequent engagement with other CAUT-member librarians and archivists.

The Librarians' and Archivists' Committee liaised throughout 2019 with the CAUT Francophones' Committee to develop a joint Policy Statement on Equity Among Librarians Working in French and English Within the Same Post-Secondary Institution. It is our hope that this document will be approved by CAUT Council, so that it can provide guidance for our members facing issues of inequity at institutions where their work is done in both of Canada's official languages.

In late 2019, the Canadian Association of Research Libraries / Association des bibliothèques de recherche du Canada (CARL/ABRC) called for commentary on a draft of a document, "Competencies for CARL / ABRC Librarians." This document alarmed many librarians at CAUT member institutions, and the CAUT Librarians' and Archivists' Committee wrote and sent a letter outlining our concerns. We noted evident lacunae of particular interest to CAUT members, including:

- No mention of collegial governance
- No mention of working with unions, bargaining units, or collective agreements
- No mention of academic freedom for librarians

Our letter also noted the document's conflation of institutional needs with individuals' careers; a focus on librarians' soft skills, rather than on hard skills such as computer programming, data analysis, data management, analytical skills – many of which are included in academic librarians' job descriptions. Our letter identified CARL as representing library administration, while CAUT represents thousands of librarians working in-scope at CARL institutions, and noted that it would be appropriate to take into account these concerns as the draft document was finalized. The CAUT Librarians' and Archivists' Committee received an acknowledgement of our letter. The final version of the "Competencies for Librarians in Canadian Research Libraries" was published in September 2020 (English: <https://www.carl-abrc.ca/strengthening-capacity/human-resource-management/core-competencies-21st-century-carl-librarians/>; Français: <https://www.carl-abrc.ca/fr/accroitre-la-capacite/11952/competences-fondamentales-des-bibliothecaires-de-labrc-au-xxie-siecle/>). We note improvements in descriptions of individual librarians' skills and career development that are in keeping with some of the concerns raised in our letter. However, there is still a dearth of engagement with collegial governance of academic libraries, academic freedom for librarians in carrying out their duties, or working effectively with collective/collegial bodies such as faculty unions and library councils. As such, the CAUT Librarians' and Archivists' realizes there is still work to be done in activism related to protecting the status of academic librarians and archivists at Canadian institutions, as it concerns documents put out by CARL and other administration-focused organizations.